

# THE PLAIN DEALER

Our 153rd Year

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## The story behind the numbers

When a city has fewer police officers working extra hours in an attempt to pare overtime costs, it's natural for suggestions to arise that the results will be negative. So it's not surprising that many police and judicial officials suggest that Cleveland's reduction of police overtime has decreased the number — and quality — of police investigations and prosecutions.

Even so, it would be wise to take with a grain of salt the suggestions that a decrease in raw numbers of criminal trials this year is due largely to cutbacks in police overtime.

Records show that the number of criminal cases entering the Cuyahoga County court system dropped by more than 2,000 last year. Some local judges with strong law-enforcement ties — as well as police union officials — contend a major reason is city overtime restrictions that have kept police from following through on cases. They say this — and factors such as the elimination of a night homicide unit — have put Cleveland's enforcement capabilities at great risk and have hurt police morale.

But a look behind that raw number suggests the decrease in criminal cases is not the cata-

strophic development critics would suggest. Much of the decrease is due to the resolution of numerous drug-related cases through out-of-court means, such as diversion programs. Also, county prosecutors acknowledge they've become more rigorous in weeding out weak cases before they go to trial. That would seem to be a development far more encouraging than having the number of criminal trials padded by cases that cannot result in convictions. Finally, according to city records, the Police Department has seen an increase both in the number of arrests and cases solved in the past two years — hardly grounds for suggesting the local legal system is facing collapse.

An impartial observer would certainly agree that the city needed to address its costly problems with overtime, and such restrictions were placed on numerous city workers, not just police. That the Police Department has shown signs of prospering despite this suggested burden, regardless of the number of criminal cases, should be grounds for praise, rather than predictions of doom.

## An embrace big enough for two

Months ago, we exhorted people to reach out to their neighbors and help lift up their communities. But who is a neighbor and what is a community?

Mary Russell, who lives in South Euclid, claims both her suburb, where she is active in school issues, and St. Adalbert's Parish School on E. 83rd St. in Cleveland. The parish is a bulwark to a neighborhood of faded wooden frame homes and

bleak streets.

At first glance, it would seem quite a stretch for Russell, 44, a white Catholic convert to Judaism and former anthropologist who would seem to know of mean streets only from case studies in her textbooks. But it isn't.

Russell can recount the slurs and stereotypes her Italian father battled in his native Chicago. He was one generation out of a neighborhood like St. Adalbert's. Education was his way out and it's the way out for others, she believes.

Each child who graduates from St. Adalbert's escapes ending up in a body bag or a squad car, and improves not only his own life, but the life of his family and his community, Russell's community, our community.

So it is no wonder Russell feels the same concern for St. Adalbert's schoolchildren as she does for her own child. She first discovered the struggling school in the newspaper when a story prompted her to send a \$500 check. However, since January, she's been urging others to donate to the school.

St. Adalbert Principal Lydia Harris wants to recruit more students from the neighborhood, but lacks the space. About 85 percent of her 396 students are non-Catholic.

Russell, who transformed herself into a fundraiser (the only time she had raised money was when she sold Girl Scout cookies as a child), wrote grants to raise the \$120,000 needed to build classrooms for the burgeoning third and fourth grades. Her next goal is to raise \$500,000 for another expansion.

The problems surrounding St. Adalbert's are easily recited: poverty, broken families, lost hopes. But Russell's solution is to "find one thing that's working and extend your reach."

And there are plenty of things working at St. Adalbert's: dedicated teachers and administrators, determined students and a diligent staff.

The fund-raising culture is firmly imbedded at St. Adalbert. The principal had raised \$45,000 before Russell volunteered to help. Even the bookkeeper writes grants for parish programs.

Russell is a helpmate to St. Adalbert's. She calls it "putting yourself in good's way." Both of her communities are the better for it.

## Fix the airport speedwalks

tive to council.

City Council members no doubt could think up plenty of good uses for \$480,000. Fixing and refixing balky walkways at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport probably is not on their list of the 10 most pressing items at which to throw money.

Unfortunately from council's standpoint, airport revenues can be used only for airport purposes. Walkway maintenance qualifies, even if it does seem wasteful considering that the moving sidewalks are to be replaced in a couple of years. Most luggage-laden travelers who use the airport garage will testify that the walkways are a boon for arms and feet — when they are working.

Too often these days, the so-called speedwalks not only aren't speedy, they're immobile. They break down often and replacement parts have to be made specially.

One option would be to close them down permanently, replacing them in two years' time when work is due to start on a second garage on the site of one of the short-term parking lots. Since maintaining the old walkways will cost about \$240,000 a year, closure could be attrac-

Director of Port Control William F. Cunningham Jr. and Councilman Dale Miller, chairman of council's Aviation Committee, appear to think that would be a public relations disaster. Deliberately idling the well-used speedwalks would anger thousands of people who already direct choice phrases at airport officials when the machinery is halted for repairs.

Cunningham says the airlines, which will foot most of the bill, haven't complained about the cost of keeping the speedwalks in service. They probably realize travelers are prickly enough these days, what with overbooking and delays and all the anxieties folks have about flying. Against that, Hopkins has gradually acquired a pleasing new look that is marred when the outdated speedwalks — installed in 1971 and 1977 — are down for maintenance.

A two-year shutdown is a grim prospect. Though some on council might not mind, Cunningham and Miller are opposed. They probably have their fingers more sensitively on the public pulse.

## Changing the law on nannies

The recent furor in California's U.S. Senate race over the hiring of nannies and housekeepers underscores the importance of an important legislative change Congress enacted this year.

In the frantic final days before lawmakers left Washington for the campaign trail, Congress updated a "nanny tax" law that had tripped up not only Clinton administration nominees, but families nationwide.

Now, finally, a reasonable standard has been set for when Social Security taxes should be paid on domestic workers. As a result, a law that had been widely ignored is likely to become meaningful again.

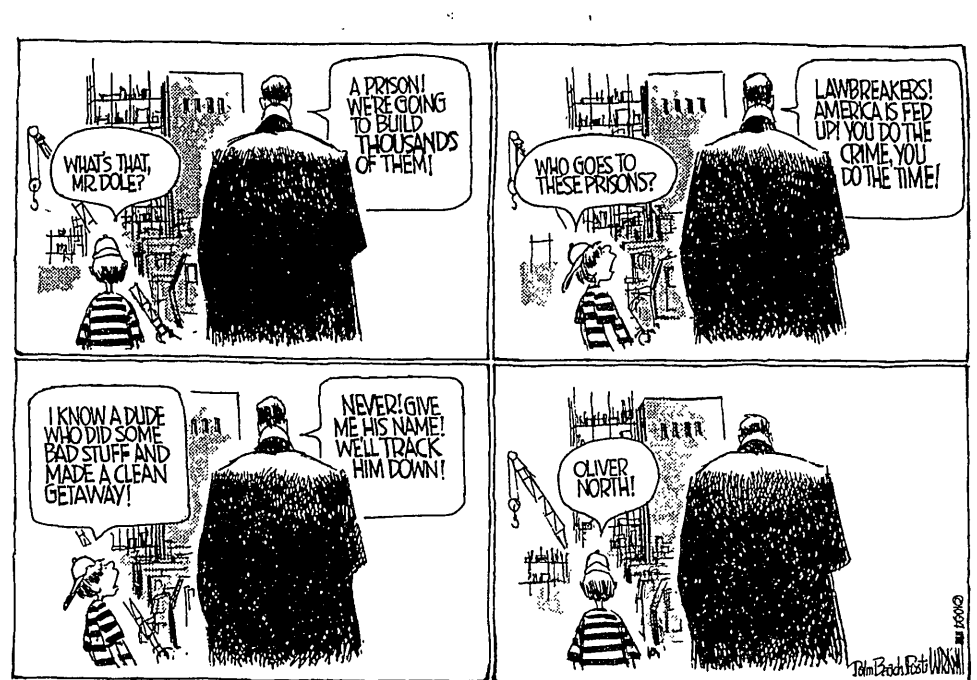
The old law, unaltered since 1950, had required employers to pay Social Security taxes for any worker earning more than \$50 per quarter — an amount that could easily be

earned nowadays by a baby sitter in several evenings.

Moreover, the taxes were supposed to be filed and paid quarterly, imposing an absurd burden on families who employ a variety of workers to help with tasks such as baby-sitting, lawn-mowing and housecleaning.

The new law is a huge improvement for several reasons: It raises the threshold fivefold — from \$50 quarterly to \$1,000 annually. It deletes the requirement to file quarterly. And it will not apply to workers under the age of 18.

It may be hard to get excited about the passage of new tax laws, but this one represents a true accomplishment. Not only will people owe less. They are likely to pay more. As a result, taxpayers and government both should benefit.



## Letters to the editor

### Independent elderly want home care after an illness

With discussions of health-care reform, issues surrounding Medicare continue to be of intense concern to Americans — both those who rely upon it for obtaining health-care services (consumers) and those dependent upon it for continued service delivery (providers). As a registered nurse and the daughter of aging parents, it was with particular interest that I read The Plain Dealer's recent Medicare stories. I was acutely reminded of my daily struggle to foster quality care and quality of life within the limitations and contradictions of the federal government's insurance program.

As the manager of a home infusion therapy program, I am frequently the person who must inform the patient of the unavailability of Medicare funding for the intravenous medication services that he requires beyond hospitalization. Inevitably, this comes as a surprise to seniors who believe that Medicare "covers everything." Additionally it confounds the physicians and nurses who are trying to meet the increasing hospital demands and patient requests for early return to the community.

Imagine the further confusion generated when I explain that the needed services will be covered if the patient consents to a stay (often for four to six weeks) in an extended care facility at a much higher daily cost than compara-

ble home care. Eligibility for Medicare occurs at age 65. In my experience this does not necessarily equate with a non-productive lifestyle or a person's inability to provide self care. With ever increasing frequency my senior patients are independent and not willing to play a submissive or dependent role in their health restoration, despite being homebound. Why then, with the escalating Medicare tab, must we continue to promote costly methods of care delivery and encourage institutional dependency?

Since the mid-1980s there has been a dramatic shift from hospital inpatient care to ambulatory and community care, home infusion therapy being but one of a multitude of services that previously required hospitalization. Advances in technology have contributed significantly to the types and complexities of medications that are safe to administer at home at a demonstrated cost savings over traditional institutional care. Still Medicare, the nation's single largest health insurer, has no benefit that explicitly covers home drug infusion therapy. Patients are repeatedly confronted with the decision to enter a skilled facility or pay out of pocket for their infusion needs.

CHRISTINE A. PIERCE  
Rocky River

### Parents must be responsible

I recently read two articles in local newspapers about the poor immunization rate in children. The reasons given were poor access, missed opportunities and misinformation to parents. I'm not sure these are the only reasons. I work in a pediatric clinic, and the failure rate for appointments is sometimes 40 percent.

I know of no health-care providers in pediatrics who have not made immunizations and health supervision of children a priority. So who isn't making immunizations a priority? Two very important stakeholders: the insurance companies and parents.

In this day and age, I find it almost inconceivable that an insurance company would not pay for immunizations; however, it is true. As parents and health-care providers, we need to let the insurance industry know this is unacceptable and must be changed. As for the parents, we cannot help you and your children unless you help us. Bring your children to their health-care provider or city health clinic, and we will immunize them. But we need to see them first.

LUCY ANDREWS-MANN  
Rocky River

### What's wrong with learning by rote?

I read Paul Springstubb's article about education proficiency tests in the Nov. 2 Plain Dealer. The tone of his article reveals much anger on his part, but he failed to express what his teaching philosophy is at this time. It appears to me that his approach is untamed wildness with no real accountability.

He seems to be objecting to learning by rote. How did he

learn to walk? How did he learn to count? Does he think that it is appropriate to pass students who won't do the work because it might affect their development? If so, how about the job they will get when few or no jobs are available for them since their education is deficient?

JAMES C. SCHAEFER  
North Royalton

### Hunting ruins walk in the park

I panicked after reading that Brecksville and Hunting Valley have OK'd the use of bows and arrows for hunting deer on private land, and that Dennis Malloy, Division of Wildlife officer for Cuyahoga County, wants other communities, such as Strongsville, Walton Hills, Valley View and Gates Mills, to also allow bowhunting to curb the deer population.

All of these communities border either the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area or area Metroparks where thousands of adults and children are out every day walking trails or bushwalking through dense forest areas.

My husband and I are out every morning trekking three to five miles through Bedford or Brecksville Metroparks. For the past few weeks, because of all the hullabaloo over the so-called deer population explosion, I have become extremely nervous while hiking

for fear of stray arrows.

Many other park-goers say they feel the same apprehension.

Even though Malloy states that "in years and years there have not been any accidents that are bow-related," remember it will only take one to prove him wrong.

Strongsville Mayor Walter Ehrfelt has thumbed down any hunting, even with bows and arrows, according to a Plain Dealer article.

Ehrfelt says it represents too much of a chance of an accident, and he doesn't want the community's children viewing injured deer running and bleeding all over.

If people would stop tearing down the forest to build asphalt jungles, the deer would stay where they belong.

DORIS JEAN BROSKE  
Maple Heights

### Do unto others

The words of Roger Brown have always spoken to me, but none so loudly as his column on Election Day. He wrote about a little girl who feared him for no other reason but being black. It reminds me of a story about my father. Herbert Hubben was a German immigrant who raised his children to feel equal and treat others the same. My sister recently reminded me of an incident when my family was trying to find a place to eat in Fayette, Miss. The first restaurant where we stopped said "whites only." My father refused to eat there. The second said "whites only." My father refused to eat there.

Despite the pleading tears from my sister and me, my family, at my father's behest, walked for almost two hours until he found a restaurant that would serve both blacks and whites. We stayed.

I was raised as a child to treat everyone the way you want to be treated. I live as an adult the same way. Thanks to my parents who were taught the same lesson.

KATE S. HUBBEN  
Cleveland

### Bigger shelters are needed

Regarding the Oct. 21 article, "Yes, city does dump homeless" by Kevin E. O'Neill of the American Civil Liberties Union:

Since the article indicated that Rev. Chalker's homeless shelters can only accommodate 300 people, may I suggest that O'Neill and his ACLU start a shelter for 400 people or promote a funding for a shelter?

JOHN J. CHINCHAR  
Brookpark

### Violence must stop

Regarding the Oct. 26 Plain Dealer article, "Teen shot at school:"

What a shame. I graduated from John Adams, and I am proud of it. So it is much more infuriating that such a change has taken place. These outrageous instances — bringing deadly weapons [to school], shootings, stabbings, and murdering children at the least provocation — have been occurring much too often in the Cleveland public schools. Up to now, nothing has been done about this disgraceful, destructive behavior.

This present administration with all these fancy ideas about educating children seems deficient in curbing this uncivil behavior.

ELEANOR SEMAN  
PARNELL  
North Olmsted

### HOW TO REACH US

WE WELCOME your letters on topics of general interest.

You must sign the letter with your full name and include address and daytime telephone number for verification. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and clarity. Brief, concise letters have a better chance of being published.

Address your letter to Letters to the Editor, The Plain Dealer, 1801 Superior Ave., Cleveland, O., 44114.

You may also fax your letter to us at 999-6209. In addition, any Mail Boxes, Etc. location will fax your letter to us at the special rate of 50 cents.